



Remarks For

The Hon. Steven C. Preston
Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration

Delivered At The

**ASSOCIATION OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
CENTERS
27TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Denver, CO

September 17, 2007

Good afternoon, I'm sorry that I can't be with you in Denver. But I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words here today. When I was with you at last year's conference I had just been sworn in as the SBA Administrator, nonetheless it was already clear to me the great value that you provide to hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs each year, and how important our partnership with you is.

In fact, at that time I had just returned from New Orleans where I saw SBA disaster officials working side-by-side with SBDC counselors to support the recovery of the small business economy in the Gulf. After over a year in the role, I have seen time and again, on my visits across the country the value of our partnership and the need for us to work closely together. The reach of the SBDC program is beyond that of any other SBA program, and provides an essential service to the entrepreneurs of our country.

I recently visited the Gulf coast for the two-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, and I was reminded of the critical ways in which you assisted our recovery effort there and how you continue to work with us to rebuild the Gulf coast and to collaborate on how best to serve America's disaster victims in the future. To that end, this week we will be piloting a new automated disaster loan application system here at the conference. We hope you will take a few minutes from your busy schedules to test the system for us and give us some feedback.

You have also been an important partner for us in our 8(a) program and we continue to work to strengthen that tie. SBA staff will be conducting a workshop on the program at the conference this week. I ask that you help SBA increase our reach to those who might be eligible by taking the opportunity here to learn more about the 8(a) program, its eligibility and procedures.

Likewise, your participation and assistance in advancing the opportunities for your clients offered by the Community Express and Patriot Express programs is so important, and we appreciate what you're doing to help us expand the reach of these programs. Many of you have been involved with the technical assistance provided in Community Express and we've already had a number of success stories about SBDC clients using the Patriot Express program to provide capital for their business. I know you will continue to be an important partner in reaching more of military community to let them know about this breakthrough loan product.

Our office of entrepreneurial development developed for us a new on-line assessment tool for Community Express clients that includes a technical assistance curriculum consisting of online classes and directions for you, our resource partners. This is a valuable new tool for our clients who want to utilize the Community Express program and will soon be available.

Speaking of online assistance, when you get a chance take a look at SBA's new assessment tool for the general public you can find it on SBA.gov under spotlight. This online tool now available will help clients understand their needs and direct them to an online curriculum into the SBDCs and other resource partners in their area and you can direct them back to SBA's website for further education and helpful online tools.

So as you can see our collaboration with the SBDC's is growing and I'm excited about the progress we're making. I'm also excited to work with our new associate administrator for entrepreneurial development, Anoop Prakash. I hope you will each take a moment to meet a new and share with him your thoughts on how SBA can be more effective and responsive to you and your clients.

It is a privilege to lead the SBA during such an exciting time of reform and revitalization at the agency and it's also a tremendous privilege for me to work with you, our dedicated partners. Since I'm unable to be there with you today to talk with you directly, please feel free to e-mail me at any time if you have comments or questions that you'd like to share, my e-mail address is Steven.Preston@sba.gov, and I assure you I will read those messages and value feedback. Thank you and have a terrific week.